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Message Text

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DRAFTED BY ARA:WHLUERS:NLF
APPROVED BY ARA - MR. LUERS
ARA/NC - MR. DEVINE
ARA/NC/C - MR. COX
ARA/NC/V - MR. SONANDRES
S/S:O D. MACK
---------- 121132
R 230421Z JAN 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 017359

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, CO, VE

SUBJECT: VENEZUELA-COLOMBIA BORDER DISPUTE

1. VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR BURELLI-RIVAS TOLD DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS ON JANUARY 19 THAT, AT LONG LAST, VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA WERE ABOUT TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT OVER THE GULF OF VENEZUELA. ACCORDING TO BURELLI THE COPEI PARTY HAS FINALLY ASSURED PRESIDENT PEREZ THAT IT WILL SUPPORT THE NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. BURELLI APPEARS TO EXPECT THAT SUCH AN AGREEMENT WILL BE SIGNED WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

2. BURELLI SAID THAT THE HEART OF THE AGREEMENT IS THE LINKAGE BETWEEN A LEGAL SETTLEMENT OF THE WATER BOUNDARY AND AN AGREEMENT TO SHARE IN JOINT EXPLOITATION OF THE PETROLEUM AND SEA BED RESOURCES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BOUNDARY. THE SETTLEMENT INVOLVES A COMPROMISE BETWEEN
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THE COLOMBIAN AND VENEZUELAN POSITIONS IN WHICH,

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ACCORDING TO BURELLI:

-- (1) COLOMBIA RECOGNIZES THE GULF OF VENEZUELA AS A

HISTORIC BAY.

--(2) A 12-MILE TERRITORIAL SEA IS RECOGNIZED FOR COLOMBIA BEGINNING AT THE PARALLEL LINE DRAWN FROM THE POINT WHERE THE COLOMBIA BOUNDARY TOUCHES THE GULF (LAS CASTILLETES) AND EXTENDING AROUND THE GUAJIRA PENINSULA.

--(3) LOS MONJES ISLANDS RETAINS A 7-MILE TERRITORIAL SEA ON THE SIDE FACING THE COLOMBIAN COAST AND A 12-MILE TERRITORIAL SEA ELSEWHERE.

3. COMMENT: WE REALIZE THAT THIS NEGOTIATION HAS BEEN SMOLDERING FOR YEARS. NONE OF US IS HOLDING HIS BREATH. BUT A RESOLUTION COULD OPEN UP FOR EXPLORATION AN AREA BELIEVED BY SOME OBSERVERS TO CONTAIN POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT NEW PETROLEUM RESOURCES OF VALUE TO BOTH COUNTRIES. PROSPECTS FOR AGREEMENT, HOWEVER, WILL NECESSARILY DEPEND ALSO IN PART UPON REACTION OF COLOMBIAN AND VENEZUELAN MILITARY, A POINT UPON WHICH BURELLI DID NOT COMMENT. SISCO

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